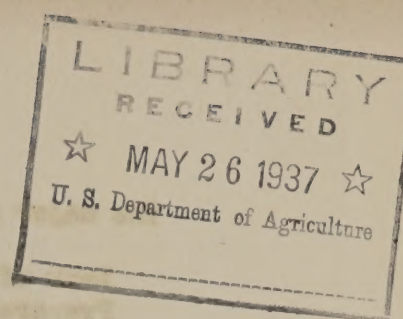


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United States Department of Agriculture  
Extension Service  
Division of Cooperative Extension



SUMMARY  
RURAL YOUNG PEOPLE'S SECTION  
CENTRAL STATES REGIONAL EXTENSION CONFERENCE

Ames, Iowa  
March 25 to 27, 1937

The Rural Young People's Section program was conducted entirely with group discussions. Major topics were selected by the program committee and leaders appointed in advance to handle the discussions. An average of 35 attended the five meetings held.

Nine States, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Kansas, and Iowa, sent exhibits of materials used in rural-youth work. These exhibits were very helpful in showing what the States are doing.

Following are the topics discussed and a brief report of each:

What the States Are Doing

Leader.--L. A. Churchill, Minnesota.  
Assistant Leader.--Eugene Merritt, U. S. Department of Agriculture.  
Secretary.--Mary Border, Kansas.

Prior to the conference the committee asked Mr. Churchill to make a brief survey of the situation, problems, and types of work in the States to be represented at the conference.

The survey was the basis for this topic of discussion. It brought out the fact that the States are at different stages in the work. State set-up, personnel, and the number of years' work vary considerably. Emphasis on lines of work also differ markedly. The number of youth organizations varies from 5 in Nebraska to 75 in Illinois and the number of members from 290 in South Dakota to 5,177 in Illinois.

The topics most popular in educational programs reported by the States were summarized as follows:

Personal problems .....	23	General.....	11
Economics .....	1	Farm and home .....	25
Recreation .....	8	Civics and Government .....	10
Methods .....	5	Leadership .....	3
Vocational .....	5		

The most popular community-service projects were summarized as follows:

Help with 4-H clubs ....	22	Cooperation with community groups .....	24
Cooperation with farm organizations .....	3	Extension activities .....	4
Recreational and social activities .....	6	Miscellaneous .....	3



The major problems of the State workers were summarized as follows:

Lack of personnel .....	12	Objectives .....	3
Preparation of		Relationships .....	5
material .....	4	Program planning .....	5
Membership .....	5	Mechanics of meetings .....	5

This survey and the discussion gave an excellent background for the following topics, which were discussed:

Educational Programs for Youth Groups  
And Use of Discussion Methods

Leader.--Earl N. Shultz, Iowa.

Assistant Leader.--G. S. Randall, Illinois.

Secretary.--Mary Border, Kansas.

The question, "How can the educational interests of the young people be determined?" received first consideration. Major points are as follows:

1. Interests can best be determined by meeting with the young folks.
2. Plans worked out entirely in the State office may not suit the interests of the groups.
3. Some guidance is necessary. Helping to analyze their situation may make a change in the topics which they think they want to what they finally want.
4. Adequate reference material should be provided.
5. Some supervision is necessary. Visits to groups by some workers average from one to four a year.
6. Programs must have variety to hold interest.
7. Surveys give an idea of approach.
8. Self-improvement is of importance and interest.
9. Training in how to earn money without detracting from father's income has an important place.

How can the discussion method be best used?

The advantages and weaknesses of various discussion methods were outlined.

Discussions led by the young people themselves:

Advantages:

1. Develop responsibility.
2. Develops the individual.
3. Affords greater opportunity for participation.

Weaknesses:

1. May wander.
2. Lack of understanding may result.
3. Poor leader may discourage discussion.
4. Topics may be taken which do not lend themselves to discussion.



Discussions led by county agents:

Advantages:

1. Has more training.
2. Has more material at hand.
3. Likely to have objectives in mind.
4. May have technique for working with young people.

Weaknesses:

1. Lacks time for preparation.
2. May cause young folks to depend on him instead of themselves.
3. May be accustomed to "telling" people.
4. Develops agent instead of the young people.

It was brought out that local people such as leading farmers, lawyers, insurance agents, and highway safety officers can be used for the forum type of discussion. Discussion training schools for leaders have been used with success in some States.

Qualifications of questions which can be led by the young folks themselves are as follows:

1. Be those with which they are familiar.
2. Present alternative situations.
3. Be within their realm of interest.
4. Be adaptable to local conditions.
5. Lead to group action within certain limitations and straighten out thinking.

Points relative to preparation of material were:

1. Supply a brief outline.
2. Provide guide questions.
3. Give available references on both sides of the question.

What educational material is presented at camps?

Most of the States sponsoring camps reported week-end camps. The kind and amount of educational material used varied widely. Discussions, recreation, handicraft and devotions were most widely used.

The use of short courses:

Few States reported experiences with short courses, most of the short courses are given at the college. It was brought out that this method may be valuable in maintaining interest in educational work.

Individual Educational Activities  
and Self-Improvement

Leader.--C. W. Jones, Kentucky.

Assistant Leader.--Mary Border, Kansas.

Secretary.--Margaret Latimer, North Dakota.



The question Should members of rural youth organizations carry individual projects? received much comment. The leader was questioned in detail concerning the Utopia Clubs whose members must carry individual projects. Some of the projects carried on are livestock feeding and management, hybrid corn, garden, home beautification, farm management, canning, clothing, Tours and individual assistance by State leader and county agents build up the interest.

Some of the questions raised concerning individual projects were:

1. Many members are not situated so that they can carry projects.
2. Young folks may not want them.
3. Projects may detract from father's income.
4. Lack of State help may limit supervision.
5. Interest may be centered in other things at the meetings.

Other points of view were:

1. A young man's project may not subtract from the farm income but may help to prepare him for his own farm enterprise later.
2. The project can aid in development of the individual.
3. People appreciate that for which they must work.
4. The project can add to the general education.

Individual projects appeared to be desirable where need is expressed by the young people. They should not be required but should be encouraged where the situation is favorable.

#### Recreational Programs for Rural Young People's Organizations

Leader.--Cleo Fitzsimmons, Illinois.

Assistant Leader.--C. C. Lang, Ohio.

Secretary.--Margaret Latimer, North Dakota.

A survey of the types of recreational activities carried on by the States included social dancing, dramatics, music appreciation, singing, folk dances, tours, field trips, book reports, "Play a While" hour on the radio, marionettes and other hobbies, handicraft, home recreation, and community talent programs.

In answer to the question, How can worth-while recreation be encouraged?, the following suggestions were made:

1. Drama and music tournaments put on for the groups.
2. Training meetings held for those who are to lead recreational activities.
3. Recreational training at camps to help to train leaders.
4. Encouraging the appointment of a recreation committee to serve for 1 year.
5. Using local people outside the group who have talent.
6. Developing a play-loan service.



7. Teaching folk games and dances of one's own State or section.
8. Providing adequate directions and program materials.
9. The putting on of rural recreation institutes for all groups of farm people interested.

Some of the other problems discussed were the handling of social dances in a proper manner and the procurement of suitable meeting places adapted to recreational programs. It was pointed out that young people's groups may at little cost fix up some old building for a meeting place.

#### Community Service and Other Group Activities

Leader.--Ruby Christenson, Minnesota.

Assistant Leader.--G. S. Randall, Illinois.

Secretary.--Margaret Latimer, North Dakota.

This discussion was centered on three questions:

1. What is meant by community service?
2. What is the value of community service?
3. How shall this part of the program be developed?

Viewpoints expressed were:

1. Community service should be regarded largely as a group enterprise.
2. Assistance with 4-H clubs is one of the most valuable service activities.
3. Youth-group service activities should be coordinated with other organizations in some cases.
4. Youth groups sometimes need help in taking an inventory of community needs.
5. Group members wish credit for activities along this line.
6. The desire to be good community citizens activates community service.

Some of the rewards to the individuals in the groups were pointed out as, a satisfaction of having done a good job; public recognition; and an opportunity for individual expression.

#### Organization Problems

Leader.--P. C. Taff, Iowa.

Assistant Leader.--F. L. McReynolds, Indiana.

Secretary.--E. A. Regnier, Illinois.

The following questions were submitted by the group for discussion:

1. Is an organized group necessary for this program?
2. Should county or community be the basis for organization?
3. If the group is a recognized organization is a name desirable?
4. What shall be the size of the group?



The following points were brought out concerning the forming of an organization:

1. Organized groups seem to be necessary for expressed needs of the individual approach on vocational problems.
2. The type of organization should be largely in the hands of the young people.
3. Some organization is necessary to carry on a planned program.
4. An organization was defined as follows: "A group organizing out of its own desires with officers and committeemen to facilitate a program of their wants and needs to express a sovereignty."
5. Organizations naturally develop.

It was the general opinion that organizations should not be set up until the young people had met several times. The organization should be simple and elastic. The emphasis should be on program.

Concerning county or community organizations the following contributions were made:

1. No definite statement can be made concerning which is desirable. The local situation is the determining factor.
2. County groups seldom break up into community groups but may at regular meetings divide into smaller groups for part of the discussion program.
3. County-wide groups appeal to young people because their acquaintance is widened.
4. The large turnover in membership is a factor in the type of organization.

The question, "What shall be the size of the group?" was next discussed.

1. The size of the group depends upon the economic situation, program, leadership, interest, and place of meeting.
2. Large groups require better leadership than small groups.
3. Our thinking should be projected to include more than 50 young people per county in our program.
4. Groups with both sexes are the most popular.

It was particularly emphasized that more of the young people in the counties should be reached. Also the membership should be kept constantly moving from 4-H club work to rural-youth groups to the adult organization.

Mr. Eugene Merritt was called upon to give his views concerning the conference. He raised the following points:

1. What shall we be concerned about?
  - a. What do you want them to learn?
  - b. When has the individual learned?
  - c. Who shall do the teaching?
2. Have we thought the things through which we are trying to do for the groups? Problems of young women need more attention.
3. What can we do in the Washington office?

The following suggestions were made by representatives from the various States:

1. Obtain more money for rural youth work in the States.
2. Set up machinery to make possible the interchange of ideas between States.

The conference session was summarized by Mr. Taff in this statement:  
"The field is open for progress and development. The program should be kept fundamentally sound as we proceed to develop it."



The following suggestions were made by representatives from the various groups:

1. There was some feeling for more work in the future.
2. The up building of the community was the first priority.

The committee members who represented the youth in this community felt that it was their responsibility to see that the youth were kept in the center of the community. The youth should be kept in the center of the community as a means of building up the community.